All Families Nationwide by Income Levels, in Percents.

	Home school	Families with children	All families
Less than $10,000	0.8%	12.6%	10.5%
$10,000 to $14,999	1.5	8.0	8.5
$15,000 to $19,999	2.2	6.1	6.8
$20,000 to $24,999	3.9	7.6	8.4
$25,000 to $29,999	4.9	7.5	7.8
$30,000 to $34,999	8.5	7.5	7.6
$35,000 to $39,999	8.1	7.1	7.0
$40,000 to $49,999	16.0	11.3	11.0
$50,000 to $74,999	32.5	18.4	18.1
$75,000 and over	21.6	13.8	14.3

National data: Bruno and Curry (1997, Table 19)

Television Viewing

The National Assessment of Educational Progress collects information on the television viewing habits of fourth-graders. Home school fourth-graders and fourth-graders nationally differ markedly in terms of television viewing. Home school students rarely watch more than 3 hours of television per day; nearly 40% of the students nationwide watch that much television.

Table 2.10
Fourth-grade students Classified by Hours of Television Viewing

	Percent of students			
	6 or more hours per day	**4 to 5 hours per day**	**2 to 3 hours per day**	**1 hour or less per day**
Home school	0.1%	1.6	33.1	65.3
Nationwide	19.0%	19.5	36.4	25.1

National data: NAEP Math 1997

Computer Use

The *Condition of Education* provides a tabulation of the percent of students nationwide who report using a computer by frequency of use for 4th, 8th, and 11th graders in 1996. At each grade level, the distribution of computer use in 1998 by home school students is different from that of the nation in 1996. At each of these three grade levels, much larger percentages of home school students never use a computer. At the fourth-grade level, a much larger percent of home school students use a computer every day.

Table 2.11
Computer Use among Home School Students and Students Nationwide in Grades 4, 8, and 11, in Percent

	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Home school	**Nationwide**	**Home school**	**Nationwide**	**Home school**	**Nationwide**
Never	28.2%	11.4%	37.1%	23.3%	40.5 %	16.0%
Less than once a week	29.4	16.3	28.9	29.2	28.9	34.2
Several times a week	21.6	62.5	18.0	30.7	17.5	31.8
Every day	20.8	9.9	16.0	16.7	13.1	18.1

National Data: Snyder and Wirt, 1998, Indicator 3.

Money Spent on Educational Materials

The amount of money spent in 1997 on home school education for textbooks, lesson materials, tutoring and enrichment services, and testing ranged from less than $200 to more than $2000. As shown in Table 2.12, the median amount of money spent was about $400.

Table 2.12
Home School Students Classified by Money Spent On Home School Education in 1997

Amount	Frequency	Percent
<$200	3,718	17.9%
200-399	7,035	33.8
400-599	4,467	21.5
600-799	1,962	9.4
800-999	985	4.7

R11

1,000-1,599	1,630	7.8
1,600-1,999	247	1.2
>2,000	411	2.0
Missing	336	1.6
Total	20,790	100.0%

Other Demographic Characteristics

Compared to the nation, a much larger percentage of home school mothers are stay-at-home mothers not participating in the labor force. Some 76.9% of home school mothers do not work for pay. About 86.3% that do work do so part time. Nationwide, in 1996, only 30% of married women with children under 18 did not participate in the labor force (US Dept of Census, 1997a, Table 632).

A very large percentage of home school parents are certified to teach. Some 19.7% of the home school mothers are certified teachers; 7.1% of fathers. Almost one out of every four home school students (23.6%) has at least one parent who is a certified teacher.

Only 7.7% of the respondents were enrolled in a full-service curriculum program, i.e., a program that serves students and their parents as a "one-stop" primary source for textbooks, materials, lesson plans, tests, counseling, evaluations, record keeping, and the like for the year's core required subjects such as language, social studies, mathematics, and science.

Academic Achievement

The complete batteries of The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) were used to assess student achievement in basic skills. The ITBS was used for home school students in Grades K-8; the TAP for students in grades 9-12. Almost all students took Form L; a handful took parallel Form K.

Achievement test batteries like the ITBS and TAP are a collection of tests in several subject areas that have been standardized and normed. Norms for all tests within these test batteries are based on the same group of students at each grade level. Such norms allow students to be compared with other students and groups to be compared with other groups.

The primary purpose of the ITBS and TAP is to assess the academic achievement of students in public and private schools. Consequently, much of the test development effort is devoted to identifying the content to be covered by these batteries. Riverside Publishers follow a four step process: 1) content specifications, 2) editorial review, 3) pilot testing, and 4) national norms development and updating.

The first and most critical step is developing content specifications and writing test items. This step involves the experience, research, and expertise of a large number of professionals representing a wide variety of specialties in the education community. Specifications are developed which outline the grade placement and emphasis of skills. These specifications draw heavily on an analysis of textbooks, research studies, nationally developed subject matter standards, and national curriculum committees.

Once the items have been developed and pilot tested, the final forms of the tests are developed and administered to large standardization samples to gather normative

data and to develop scales.

The spring standardization sample for the 10 levels of the ITBS consisted of approximately 137,000 students from public schools, Catholic schools and private non-Catholic schools. The public school sample was stratified to assure adequate representation based on geographic region, district enrollment, socioeconomic status of the district. The Catholic school sample was stratified on geographic region and diocese enrollment. The non-Catholic private school sample was stratified on region and school type. The spring standardization sample for the four levels of the TAP consisted of approximately 20,000 students stratified on the same variables. National norms were developed based on the combined weighted distributions of all three school types: public, Catholic and non-Catholic private. Catholic/private school norms were developed based on the combined weighted distributions of the latter two groups. For simplicity, the combined public, Catholic and non-Catholic private school norms are referenced in this report as national norms or public/private school norms.

The data from the standardization sample are used to develop a variety of reporting scales, such as percentiles and grade equivalent scores. The analyses in this report rely primarily on the Developmental Standard Score (DSS) scale developed by Riverside Publishers. The DSS is a number that describes a student's location on an achievement continuum that spans grades K through 12. Table 3.1 shows the median DSS and median age that corresponds to each grade level in the national standardization sample. The DSS scale shows that the average annual growth in DSS units decreases each year.

Table 3.1
Median Developmental Scaled Scores and Median Age for the ITBS/TAP Spring National Standardization Sample

	Grade												
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DSS	130	150	168	185	200	214	227	239	250	260	268	275	280
Age	6.1	7.2	8.2	9.3	10.2	11.2	12.2	13.2	14.2	15.2	16.2	17.2	18.1

Source for age medians: Drahozal (1998, personal communication)

This same DSS scale is used for all tests and levels of the ITBS and TAP. The main advantages of the DSS are that it mirrors reality well, spans all grade levels, and provides a quasi equal interval scale which has a variety of attractive statistical properties. Most importantly, DSS scores can be compared to each other and can be meaningfully averaged.

The main disadvantage of DSS scores is that they have no built-in meaning. Reference points are needed to interpret DSS scores. "Grade level" is one possible reference point. A DSS score of 170 in reading, for example, is about equal to the typical reading score for second-grade students in public and private schools in the spring of the year. A more refined reference is the percentile score that corresponds to each DSS score. The 170 in *reading*, for example, corresponds to the 54th percentile of second graders. That is, this score is better than the score received by 54 percent of the second graders using the 1995 spring norms.

The reader should note that while all tests of the ITBS/TAP have the same median DSS score at each grade level, the distributions within each subject area vary. A DSS score of 310 for a tenth grader in *reading*, for example, corresponds to the 87th percentile. A DSS score of 170 in *mathematics* for a tenth grader would place the student at the 79th percentile.

Percentiles are always defined in terms of a grade level. This can be problematic when analyzing data for home school students. In this study, 24.5% of the home school students were one or more grades above the grade usually associated with that student's age (see Table 3.2). A strong case can be made that rather than using the percentile corresponding to the enrolled grade, as we did in this study, one should use the percentile associated with the student's nominal grade, i.e., the grade usually associated with the student's age. The argument is that a 10-year-old home school student enrolled in 5th grade should be compared to his age peers in 4th grade. The counter argument is that the percentiles already consider the fact that students are not always in their nominal grade since the standardization sample had students above and below grade level. We initially analyzed the data both ways. Rather than expose our analysis to criticism, we chose to take the more conservative route by employing the enrolled grade.

While very meaningful, percentiles do not provide a complete picture of a student's or group's academic performance. In this study, we used grade equivalent scores as an additional reference point for interpreting DSS scores. A grade equivalent score approximates a child's development in terms of grade and month within grade. A DSS reading score of 170 can be viewed as the typical DSS score earned by students in the ninth month of the second grade or a GES score of 2.9. Just as the percentile associated with a DSS scores varies by subtest, so do the properties of GES scores vary across subjects.

Grade Equivalent Scores are particularly useful for estimating a student's developmental status in terms of grade. But, these scores must be interpreted carefully. An GES Score of 6.3 in reading for an 9 year old in the 3rd grade, for example, clearly indicates that the third grader is doing well. This does not, however, mean that the third grader belongs in the 6th grade. It only means that the third grader can read as well as a sixth grader.

The usual interpretation of a Grade Equivalent Score of 6.3 for a third grader is that this third grade student can read third grade material as well as a sixth grader can read third grade material, not that he or she can read sixth grade material. The DSS of the ITBS/TAP, however, is unique. The DSS scales were developed by administering the same special scaling test to students in grades K-3, another common scaling test to students in grades 3 to 9, and another to students in grades 8-12. Thus, in the scaling study, the third graders did take the same test as the sixth graders in each subject area.

Grade Placement

Home school students are able to progress through instructional material at the student's rate. Thus, it is easy for home school students to be enrolled one or more grades above their public and private school-age peers. To evaluate the frequency of advanced placement, we compared students' enrolled and nominal grades. The enrolled grade was identified by the parents and used to determine the ITBS/TAP level. The nominal grade is the public school grade in which the student would normally be enrolled in based on the child's month and year of birth.

As shown in Table 3.2, almost one fourth of the home school students (24.5%) are

enrolled one or more grades above their nominal grade. While comparable figures nationally do not exist, one research director in a large school district estimated that less than 5% of their students are enrolled above grade level.

Table 3.2
Home School Students Classified by Discrepancy Between Enrolled and Nominal Grade

Enrolled minus Nominal Grade	Frequency	Percent
-2	58	0.3%
-1	1,019	5.1
0	13,931	69.8
+1	4,637	23.2
+2	199	1.0
+3	58	0.3

Percentages do not sum to 100% due to a small percentage of students outside this range.

Overall Achievement

Table 3.3 shows the median scaled score (DSS score) for home school students on the *Composite with Computation, Reading Total, Language, Mathematics Total with Computation, Social Studies*, and *Science* subtest scores by grade. The corresponding percentiles shown in the table are the within grade percentile scores for the nation that correspond to the given scaled scores. For example, home school students in Grade 3 have a median composite scaled score of 207 which corresponds to the 81st percentile nationwide. The median home school student in third grade out- performs 81% of the third graders nationwide. As an additional comparison, we provide the national median for each grade in the last column. By definition this is the 50th percentile of students nationwide.

Table 3.3
Median Scaled Scores (corresponding national percentile) by Subtest and Grade for Home School Students

Grade	N	Composite	Reading	Language	Math	Soc. Stud.	Science	National Median
1	1504	170 (91)	174 (88)	166 (82)	164 (81)	166 (80)	164 (78)	150 (50)

2	2153	192 (90)	196 (89)	186 (80)	188 (85)	189 (81)	195 (86)	168 (50)
3	2876	207 (81)	210 (83)	195 (62)	204 (78)	205 (76)	214 (83)	185 (50)
4	2625	222 (76)	228 (83)	216 (67)	220 (76)	216 (68)	232 (81)	200 (50)
5	2564	243 (79)	244 (83)	237 (69)	238 (76)	236 (71)	260 (86)	214 (50)
6	2420	261 (81)	258 (82)	256 (73)	254 (76)	265 (81)	273 (84)	227 (50)
7	2087	276 (82)	277 (87)	276 (77)	272 (79)	276 (79)	282 (81)	239 (50)
8	1801	288 (81)	288 (86)	291 (79)	282 (76)	290 (79)	289 (78)	250 (50)
9	1164	292 (77)	294 (82)	297 (77)	281 (68)	297 (76)	292 (73)	260 (50)
10	775	310 (84)	314 (89)	318 (84)	294 (72)	318 (83)	310 (79)	268 (50)
11	317	310 (78)	312 (84)	322 (83)	296 (68)	318 (79)	314 (77)	275 (50)
12	66	326 (86)	328 (92)	332 (85)	300 (66)	334 (84)	331 (82)	280 (50)

It is readily apparent from Table 3.3 that the median scores for home school students are well above their public/private school counterparts in every subject and in every grade. The corresponding percentiles range from the 62nd to the 91st percentile; most percentiles are between the 75th and the 85th percentile. The lowest percentiles are in *Mathematics Total with Computation* subtest (labeled *Math* in the tables); the highest in *Reading Total*. While the grade-to-grade increase in national medians is 13 DSS points in the lower grades, the annual increase for home school students is about 16 points. These are exceptional scores and exceptional grade-to-grade gains.

As shown in Table 3.4, the same superiority of median scaled scores holds when comparing home school students to students enrolled in Catholic/Private schools. The Catholic/Private school percentiles corresponding to median scaled scores range from the 53rd percentile to the 89th percentile; most are between the 65th to 75th percentile. In every area and every grade, the median scores for home school students exceed the median scores of students enrolled in Catholic/Private schools.

Table 3.4
Median Scaled Scores of Home School Students
(Corresponding Catholic/Private School Percentile)
by Subtest and Grade

Grade	Composite	Reading	Language	Math	Soc. Stud.	Science
1	170 (89)	174 (86)	166 (80)	164 (80)	166 (73)	164 (75)
2	192 (88)	196 (84)	186 (74)	188 (81)	189 (81)	195 (85)
3	207 (74)	210 (74)	195 (55)	204 (71)	205 (69)	214 (80)
4	222 (72)	228 (72)	216 (58)	220 (69)	216 (56)	232 (76)
5	243 (71)	244 (72)	237 (60)	238 (68)	236 (60)	260 (82)
6	261 (71)	258 (71)	256 (58)	254 (65)	265 (72)	273 (77)
7	276 (72)	277 (77)	276 (63)	272 (70)	276 (68)	282 (73)
8	288 (72)	288 (75)	291 (65)	282 (68)	290 (68)	289 (67)
9	292 (63)	294 (70)	297 (61)	281 (56)	297 (63)	292 (59)
10	310 (71)	314 (81)	318 (71)	294 (57)	318 (72)	310 (66)
11	310 (63)	312 (72)	322 (69)	296 (56)	318 (67)	314 (63)
12	326 (74)	328 (81)	332 (71)	300 (53)	334 (74)	331 (72)

The relationship between median composite scaled scores for home school students, Catholic/Private school students, and the nation is shown in the Figure 1. At each grade level, the test performance of Catholic/Private school students is above the national performance levels, especially in the higher grade levels. Also at each grade level, the performance of home school students is above the performance levels of students enrolled in Catholic/Private schools. The differences between these groups are considerable. For example, the median score for 7th graders nationwide is 239; for Catholic/Private school students the median is 257; for home school students the median is 276. Another way to look at this chart is to examine the grades corresponding to a given composite score. A composite scale score of 250, for example, is typical of a home school student in Grade 6, a Catholic/Private school student in Grade 7 and students nationwide in the later stages of grade 8.

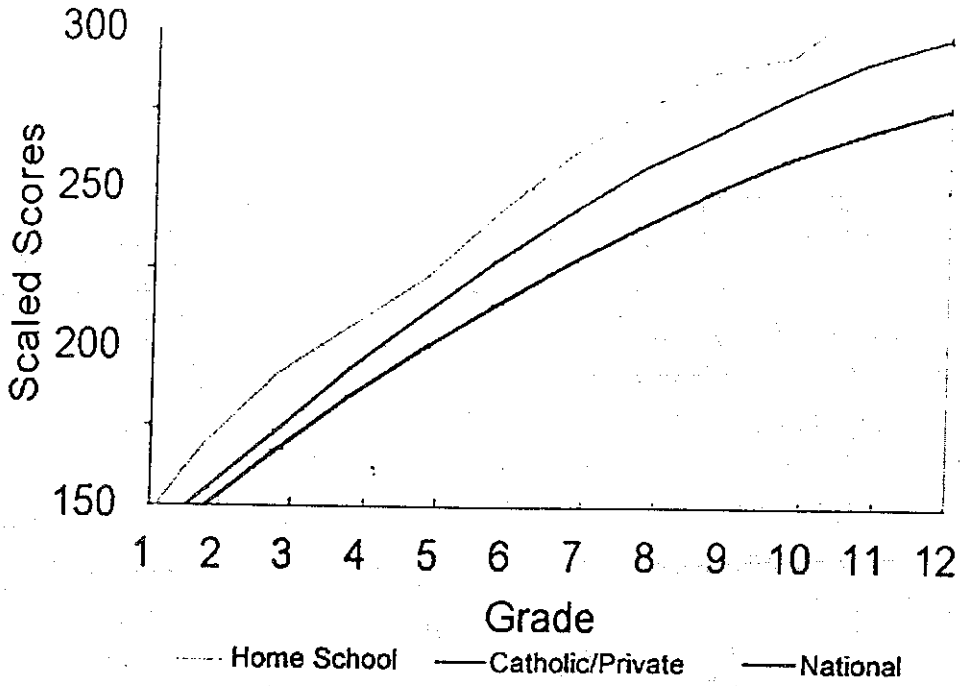

Figure 1. Academic Achievement of Home School, Catholic/Private and the Nation's Students

The Grade Equivalent Scores (GES) corresponding to the median DSS scaled scores for home school students are shown in Table 3.5. These GES scores indicate the performance levels of home school students in terms of student grade placement nationwide. The median composite scaled score for fourth-grade home school students, for example, is 217. This is comparable to the median score expected of students nationwide in the ninth month of fifth grade. Compared to students nationwide, the median fourth-grade home school student test performance is 1.1 grade equivalents above his public/private school peers. By 8th grade, the median performance of home school students on the ITBS/TAP is almost four grade equivalents above that of students nationwide. Similar trends hold for all subject areas.

The reader should recognize that the grade equivalent scale tends to magnify differences at the high school level and that the percentile scale is more meaningful in these higher grades. While 50% of eighth grade home school students have scores that are 4 grade equivalents above the public school median, so do some 20% of eighth grade students in public schools. The revealing statistics are the percentiles which are consistently high across grade levels and subject areas.

Table 3.5
Median Scaled Scores (corresponding Grade Equivalent Scores) by Subtest and Nominal Grade for Home School Students

Grade	Composite	Reading	Language	Math	Soc. Stud.	Science	National Median

1	170 (2.9)	174 (3.1)	166 (2.6)	164 (2.6)	166 (2.7)	164 (2.6)	150 (1.8)
2	192 (4.1)	196 (4.5)	186 (3.8)	188 (4.0)	189 (4.0)	195 (4.5)	168 (2.8)
3	207 (5.1)	210 (5.5)	195 (4.4)	204 (5.2)	205 (5.1)	214 (5.8)	185 (3.8)
4	222 (6.2)	228 (6.9)	216 (5.9)	220 (6.4)	216 (5.9)	232 (7.3)	200 (4.8)
5	243 (8.3)	244 (8.3)	237 (7.6)	238 (7.7)	236 (7.6)	260 (9.8)	214 (5.8)
6	261 (10.1)	258 (9.6)	256 (9.4)	254 (9.1)	265 (10.4)	273 (11.6)	227 (6.8)
7	276 (11.9)	277 (12.0)	276 (11.9)	272 (11.3)	276 (11.9)	282 (12.5)	239 (7.8)
8	288 (12.9)	288 (12.9)	291 (-)	282 (12.5)	290 (-)	289 (-)	250 (8.8)
9	292 (-)	294 (-)	297 (-)	281 (12.4)	297 (-)	292 (-)	260 (9.8)
10	310 (-)	314 (-)	318 (-)	294 (-)	318 (-)	310 (-)	268 (10.8)
11	310 (-)	312 (-)	322 (-)	296 (-)	318 (-)	314 (-)	275 (11.8)
12	326 (-)	328 (-)	332 (-)	300 (-)	334 (-)	331 (-)	280 (12.8)

(The - sign indicates the scaled scores are beyond the effective range for GES conversion.)

The grade equivalent score comparisons for home school students and the nation are shown in Figure 2. In grades one through four, the median ITBS/TAP composite scaled scores for home school students are a full grade above that of their public/private school peers. The gap starts to widen in grade five. By the time home school students reach grade 8, their median scores are almost 4 grade equivalents above their public/private school peers.

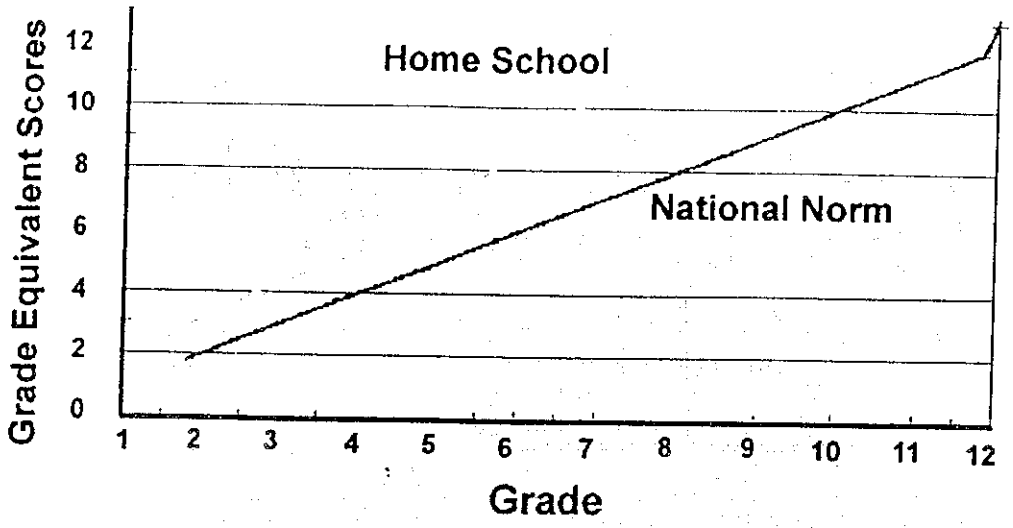

Figure 2. Home School Students Compared to the National Norm Group in Grade Equivalent Units

Years of Home Schooling

Almost half of the respondents (47%) indicated that they have been home schooled for each grade prior to their current grade, i.e., their entire academic life. Table 3.6 shows that students who are home schooled for their entire academic life do better than students who have been home schooled for only a few years *(F academic life =108.2; df=1,9750; p<.01)*. There is also a significant interaction between grade and years home schooled *(F=7.4; df=9,9750, p< .01)*, indicating that the effectiveness of home schooling varies with the student's grade. The differences are most meaningful starting in Grade 6.

[All F ratios reported here are from a two-way analysis of variance with composite scaled scores as the dependent measure, grade as a blocking variable, and one independent variable. Because the students are within families, the dataset was trimmed by randomly selecting one child from each family. Had the full dataset been used, the variance of the children within a family would have been artificially smaller than the variance of among children in the population of inference. This would have increased the risk of Type I error, showing significance when significance may not be so. To assure adequate cell sizes, the analyses were also restricted to Grades 1 through 10. A statistically significant difference only means that there is evidence of a difference in population values. The difference may be small and not meaningful. "n.s." is used to indicate not significant.]

One reviewer questioned whether this significant difference was due to life-long home schooling or was life-long home schooling serving as a proxy for parent education or income. The correlation of life-long home schooling and whether either parent has a college degree is .12, indicating there is some, but not a great deal of overlap between these variables. The correlation with income level was .02, indicating no relationship. Thus, whether a student is home schooled his or her entire life appears to be significantly related to achievement.

Table 3.6
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding

R20

Percentile
by Number of Grades Home Schooled and Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home schooled entire academic life										
Mean	170	195	208	224	244	265	278	291	300	314
sd	12	16	17	20	23	23	25	26	27	23
N	479	743	863	608	552	444	319	242	159	100
%ile	92	95	85	81	82	85	83	84	83	86
Home schooled some grades										
Mean	168	192	206	222	241	256	270	282	288	299
sd	11	15	18	20	24	26	27	30	30	32
N	221	428	616	666	681	688	628	608	436	287
%ile	90	92	82	79	79	78	77	78	73	75
Difference	2	3	2	2	3	9	8	9	12	15

[The percentiles (%ile) shown in this and the following tables are the within-grade percentiles corresponding to the mean composite scale scores, differences and ranges refer to differences in and ranges of mean composite scale scores, sd refers to standard deviation, N is the number of students within each cell.]

Enrolled in a Full-Service Curriculum

There is no significant difference in the mean composite scaled scores of home school students enrolled in a full-service curriculum and home school students not so enrolled. As shown in Table 3.7, the means are quite close at all grade levels *(F enrollment=.24; df=1,9750; n.s.)*.

Table 3.7
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Full-service Curriculum Status and Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not enrolled in a full-service curriculum										
Mean	170	194	207	223	243	260	272	284	291	302
sd	12	15	17	20	23	25	26	29	30	31
N	646	1109	1361	1214	1145	1042	847	771	495	320
%ile	92	94	83	80	81	81	79	79	76	78
Enrolled in a full-service curriculum										

R 24

Mean	167	199	209	220	241	256	272	286	289	306
sd	13	17	18	21	24	29	31	30	30	28
N	54	63	118	60	89	89	101	79	100	67
%ile	89	97	86	76	79	78	79	80	74	81
Difference	3	-5	-2	3	2	4	0	-2	-2	-4

Student Gender

There are no significant differences in the achievement levels of male versus female home school students *(F for gender=.01; df=1,9750; n.s.)*. As shown in Table 3.8, the means are virtually identical at all grade levels.

Table 3.8
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Grade and Gender

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Males										
Mean	170	195	208	223	243	260	271	285	288	303
sd	12	15	18	19	23	25	26	30	33	33
N	355	576	749	639	600	597	479	428	294	181
%ile	92	95	85	80	81	81	78	80	73	78
Females										
Mean	169	193	207	223	242	260	274	284	293	303
sd	12	16	17	21	24	25	26	28	26	28
N	345	595	730	634	634	535	469	422	302	206
%ile	91	93	83	80	80	81	80	79	77	78
Difference	1	2	1	0	1	0	-3	1	-5	0

Money Spent on Educational Materials

There is a significant difference in the achievement levels of home school students depending on the amount of money spent per child on educational materials including textbooks, lesson materials, tutoring, enrichment services, and testing (see Table 3.9). At almost every grade level, students in families spending $600 or more outperform students in families spending less than $200 *(F for money spent=41.1; df=3,9585; p <.01)*. There is also a significant interaction between grade and money spent *(F=2.7; df=27,9585; p <.01)* indicating that the amount of money spent on education makes a bigger difference at the higher grade levels. The correlation between money spent on

educational materials and income is significant ($r=.24$, $p<.01$), indicating that this effect may be due to family characteristics rather than expenditures.

Table 3.9
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Money Spent on Educational Materials per Student and Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
$600 or more										
mean	171	195	208	227	245	264	278	289	298	307
sd	11	16	17	21	23	25	25	30	27	32
N	152	236	408	329	317	306	289	260	226	147
%ile	93	95	85	84	83	84	83	83	81	81
$400-599										
mean	169	196	211	222	245	261	271	286	291	306
sd	13	15	17	19	22	25	26	25	31	30
N	160	286	376	263	268	253	261	179	105	69
%ile	91	96	88	79	83	82	78	80	76	81
$200-399										
mean	171	194	206	220	241	257	270	280	284	299
sd	12	16	18	20	23	25	26	30	32	29
N	252	438	456	469	410	375	249	281	186	119
%ile	93	94	82	76	79	79	77	76	70	75
$199 or less										
mean	166	191	203	222	238	258	265	285	284	299
sd	11	15	17	20	26	24	27	28	25	30
N	130	163	219	204	220	186	137	122	74	45
%ile	87	91	78	79	76	80	73	80	70	75
Range	5	4	8	7	7	7	13	9	14	8

Family Income

There is a significant difference in the achievement of home school students based on family income. As shown in Table 3.10, students in higher income families consistently have higher mean composite scaled scores *(F for income = 79.1; $df=3,9186$; $p < .01$)*. There is also a significant interaction of income and grade *($F=2.6$; $df=27,9186$; $p<.01$)*. Achievement differences due to income are more pronounced for students in higher grades.

Table 3.10
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Family Income and Student Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
$70,000 or more										
mean	173	196	211	225	247	264	278	292	301	306
Sd	10	15	16	20	23	24	25	28	27	29
N	188	300	370	350	296	300	226	202	139	80
%ile	95	96	88	82	85	84	83	85	84	81
$50,000 -69,999										
mean	169	195	209	224	243	261	274	287	293	306
Sd	11	15	17	18	23	24	23	26	29	34
N	165	285	407	352	316	293	239	214	135	109
%ile	91	95	86	81	81	82	80	81	77	81
$35,000 -49,999										
mean	169	193	206	222	241	258	270	281	292	305
sd	12	16	19	21	21	23	26	27	30	30
N	164	266	327	251	269	262	264	212	141	96
%ile	91	93	82	81	79	80	77	81	76	80
$34,999 or less										
mean	167	192	204	218	237	255	262	276	278	297
sd	14	17	17	21	24	28	29	32	30	31
N	149	232	304	245	276	228	178	181	148	66
%ile	89	92	79	74	75	77	70	73	65	74
Range	6	4	7	7	10	9	16	16	13	9

Parent Certification as a Teacher

To determine whether there is a difference in achievement for students in households where at least one parent holds a state issued teaching certificate, we analyzed the data for the 7,607 students with at least one parent that has a college degree. As shown in Table 3.11, the achievement levels across groups are remarkably similar. Controlling for grade and parent education level, there is no significant difference in the achievement levels of home school students whose parents are certified and those that are not *(F for certification=2.9; df=1,7587; n.s.)*.

Table 3.11

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Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Parent Teaching Certificate and Student Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
At least one certified parent										
Mean	172	196	212	225	245	268	278	289	299	308
sd	11	16	15	20	21	21	24	24	25	31
N	183	293	342	285	290	245	243	208	137	88
%ile	94	96	89	82	83	87	83	83	82	82
Neither parent certified										
Mean	171	195	210	225	246	263	276	291	299	309
sd	12	15	16	19	22	24	25	25	28	27
N	396	688	840	734	661	616	470	412	281	195
%ile	93	95	87	82	84	83	82	84	82	83
Difference	1	1	2	0	-1	5	2	-2	0	-1

Parent Education Levels

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has consistently shown marked differences in the performance levels of students nationwide as a function of parent's educational level. Similar differences appear in the performance levels of home school students. As shown in Table 3.12, at every grade level, children of college graduates out perform children whose parents do not have a college degree ($F=566.4$; $df=2,9744$; $p < .01$). There is also a significant interaction between grade and parent education ($F=8.7$; $df=18,9744$; $p < .01$), indicating that the effect of parent education is more pronounced in some grades. It is worthy to note that, at every grade level, the mean performance of home school students whose parents do not have a college degree is much higher than the mean performance of students in public schools. Their percentiles are mostly in the 65th to 69th percentile range.

Table 3.12
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile by Parent Education and Student Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Both parents have college degrees										
Mean	178	196	212	228	249	268	278	296	306	314
sd	11	15	15	19	21	22	25	22	24	26

N	367	640	706	567	535	501	420	325	206	137
%ile	98	96	89	85	86	87	83	88	87	86
One parent has a college degree										
Mean	172	194	208	222	242	260	275	285	293	304
sd	13	15	16	19	22	24	24	25	28	29
N	212	341	477	451	417	361	293	297	212	147
%ile	94	94	85	79	80	81	81	80	77	79
Neither parent has a college degree										
Mean	161	187	196	212	231	245	260	268	271	288
sd	10	16	17	19	25	25	28	34	27	33
N	121	191	297	255	285	270	233	231	177	104
%ile	79	87	67	66	68	67	69	66	59	67
Range	17	9	16	14	17	23	18	28	35	26

Television Watching

It was pointed out above that home school students spend significantly less time watching television than do the general population of school-age students. Like the nation as a whole, increased amounts of television viewing for home school students is associated with lower achievement test scores. Table 3.13 shows that at every grade level, there is a steady decline in achievement as the amount of television viewing increases *(F for televison viewing =142.5; df=3,9685; p <.01)*. The interaction of grade and amount of television viewing is also significant *(F=5.5; df=27,9685; p <.01)*. The effects of television on achievement are more pronounced with students in higher grades.

Table 3.13
Composite Scale Score Mean, Standard Deviation and Corresponding Percentile
by Amount of Television Viewing Each Week and Grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No Television										
mean	166	199	213	227	251	271	281	294	308	307
sd	13	15	15	19	22	24	26	25	27	27
N	81	164	165	161	172	140	117	107	102	64
%ile	87	97	90	84	88	89	86	86	88	81
1 hour or less										
mean	171	196	208	225	245	263	274	288	298	308

sd	12	15	17	20	22	23	25	29	25	29
N	355	554	795	650	586	525	453	369	225	186
%ile	93	96	85	82	83	83	80	82	81	82
2 hours										
mean	169	191	205	219	238	253	268	279	278	299
sd	11	15	18	20	23	26	27	27	31	29
N	186	325	380	333	333	309	237	241	182	92
%ile	91	91	81	75	76	75	75	75	65	75
3 hours or more										
mean	169	187	203	216	233	252	269	275	281	280
sd	11	17	17	20	26	27	28	31	29	35
N	75	121	136	117	135	155	140	130	86	43
%ile	91	87	78	71	70	74	76	72	67	60
Range	5	12	10	11	18	19	13	19	30	28

Summary of Major Findings

Major findings: Demographics

- Home school parents have more formal education than parents in the general population; 88% continued their education beyond high school compared to 50% for the nation as a whole.
- The median income for home school families ($52,000) is significantly higher than that of all families with children ($36,000) in the United States.
- Almost all home school students (98%) are in married couple families. Most home school mothers (77%) do not participate in the labor force; almost all home school fathers (98%) do work.
- Home school students watch much less television than students nationwide; 65% of home school students watch one hour or less per day compared to 25% nationally.
- The median amount of money spent annually on educational materials is about $400 per home school student.
- The distribution of home school students by grade in grades 1-6 is consistent with that of all school children. Proportionally fewer home school students are enrolled at the high school level.

Major findings: Achievement

- Almost 25% of home school students are enrolled one or more grades above their age-level peers in public and private schools.
- Home school student achievement test scores are exceptionally high. The median

scores for every subtest at every grade (typically in the 70th to 80th percentile) are well above those of public and Catholic/Private school students.

- On average, home school students in grades 1 to 4 perform one grade level above their age-level public/private school peers on achievement tests.
- The achievement test score gap between home school students and public/private school students starts to widen in grade 5.
- Students who have been home schooled their entire academic life have higher scholastic achievement test scores than students who have also attended other educational programs.
- There are no meaningful differences in achievement by gender, whether the student is enrolled in a full-service curriculum, or whether a parent holds a state issued teaching certificate.
- There are significant achievement differences among home school students when classified by amount of money spent on education, family income, parent education, and television viewing.

Discussion

Incorporating the largest sample ever used to study home school students and their families, this study is a rich source of information concerning their demographics and achievement. It clearly shows that home school students and their families are a select population. Family income and education levels are well above national averages. The family structure is traditional with married couples as parents, several children, father as bread winner, and a stay-at-home mother. A large percent of home school students have a parent that has held a state-issued teaching certificate. Home school families do not spend a great deal of money on educational materials and tend not to subscribe to pre-packaged full-service curriculum programs.

In spite of the large size of this assessment, there are notable limitations to this study. Foremost, home school students and their families are not a cross-section of the United States population. The act of home schooling distinguishes this group in terms of their exceptionally strong commitment to education and children. There are major demographic differences between home school families and the general United States population. Further, it should be noted that it was not possible within the parameters of this study to evaluate whether this sample is truly representative of the entire population of home school students.

The content of the Riverside tests is another major limitation of this study. While home schools teach the basic skill areas of reading, mathematics, social studies, and science, they do not necessarily follow the same scope, sequence, or emphasis as traditional public and private schools. The primary focus of many home schools is on religious and moral values. Home schools can and do place a greater emphasis on study skills, critical thinking, working independently, and love of learning. Public and private schools usually select the Riverside test due to its close alignment with their curriculum; home schools select the test primarily out of convenience.

We were conservative in our analysis of achievement test results. Even though some 25% of home school students are enrolled in an advanced grade level, we used current grade placement rather than the age appropriate grade placement when determining percentiles and grade equivalents. When looking at test scores, we chose the composite score with mathematics computation, even though mathematics appears to be a weaker subject for older home school students. As a result, we have probably underestimated home school academic performance levels.

Even with our conservative approach, the achievement levels of the home school students in this study are exceptional. Within each grade level and each skill area, the median scores for home school students fell between the 70th and 80th percentile of students nationwide and between the 60th and 70th percentile of Catholic/Private school students. For younger students, this is a one year lead. By the time home school students are in 8th grade, they are four years ahead of their public/private school counterparts.

Our results are consistent with previous studies of the achievement of home school students. A 1990 national home schooling survey of 1,516 families in the United States noted that, on average, home education families have parents with greater formal education, more children, and higher family income (*Home School Court Report*, 1990). Two-parent families were the norm and they were predominantly Christian. The average age of the children was just over eight years--a majority of the children had never attended public or private schools. There were equal numbers of male and female students. On standardized achievement tests, the home-schooled students performed at or above the 80th percentile on national norms in reading, listening, language, math, science, social studies, basic battery, and complete battery scores.

Calvery et.al. (1992) compared the achievement of Arkansas home schooled and public schooled students in grades 4, 7, and 10 using 6 subscales of the MAT-6. Home schooled students scored higher than their counterparts in reading, mathematics, language, total basic battery, science, and social studies at grade 4 and grade 7. They also scored significantly above public school means for grade 10 in reading, mathematics, total basic battery, science, and social studies, but scored significantly lower in language.

Ray (1997) analyzed demographic and achievement data from 5,402 home school students in 1,657 families. While Ray used a different approach to analyze achievement data, he noted exceptionally high average achievement levels and that students with long histories of being home schooled had higher achievement scores.

Home school students did quite well in 1998 on the ACT college entrance examination. They had an average ACT composite score of 22.8 which is .38 standard deviations above the national ACT average of 21.0 (ACT, 1998). This places the average home school student in the 65th percentile of all ACT test takers.

These comparisons between home school students and students nationwide must be interpreted with a great deal of caution. This was not a controlled experiment. Students were not randomly assigned public, private or home schools. As a result, the reported achievement differences between groups do not control for background differences in the home school and general United States population and, more importantly, cannot be attributed to the type of school a child attends. This study does not demonstrate that home schooling is superior to public or private schools. It should not be cited as evidence that our public schools are failing. It does not indicate that children will perform better academically if they are home schooled. The design of this study and the data do not warrant such claims. All the comparisons of home school students with the general population and with the private school population in this report fail to consider a myriad of differences between home school and public school students. We have no information as to what the achievement levels of home school students would be had they been enrolled in public or private schools. This study simply shows that those parents choosing to make a commitment to home schooling are able to provide a very successful academic environment.

Note

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EPAA Editorial Board

R32

Kewaskum district considering virtual charter school

By ANNE DAVIS
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Last Updated: Jan. 18, 2003

Kewaskum - Months after two previous efforts fell apart, a for-profit education company headed by former U.S. Secretary of Education Bill Bennett is hoping to start Wisconsin's second virtual charter school in this small, rural Washington County district.

Representatives of K12 Inc., which operates seven such schools across the country, will pitch the plan Monday to members of the Kewaskum School Board during a special meeting called just for that purpose. The proposal calls for the district to establish a charter school, to be operated by K12 and used by students all over the state. The students would primarily be taught at home by their parents under the electronic supervision of a teacher.

The cutting-edge concept in public education, which has come under fire by the state's largest teachers union and others, made its debut in Wisconsin in the fall with the opening

How It Works

- Students enroll in a virtual school through Wisconsin's open enrollment law, which allows a student living in one public school district to enroll in any other district in the state as long as certain criteria are met.
- The students do not physically attend classes at the charter school. They are taught at home by their parents, using the curriculum and a computer supplied by the company that operates the school. Lessons are monitored electronically by a teacher.

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of Wisconsin Connections Academy in Appleton. The school operates under a charter granted by the Appleton School District and is run by a K12 competitor, Sylvan Ventures.

Related Coverage

Section: Education

K12 had tried to get its own Wisconsin charter school up and running in the fall, but efforts to strike a deal with school districts in Lake Mills and McFarland fell apart. The company has been talking with Kewaskum officials since early last month.

"We've had a lot of interest from school boards and superintendents, but right now, we're really focused on Kewaskum," said Bryan Flood, a K12 spokesman.

The first district official to talk with the company was School Board member Mary Meisser.

"I think it's great. I think the way it operates is great," said Meisser, who said the school would be an option for students who don't do well in a regular school.

Meisser said she was also attracted by Bennett's connection to the company.

"I really believe that Bill Bennett has been a champion of education reform," she said. "I have such respect for him, I thought it was worth looking at."

Superintendent Wayne Graczyk also supports the concept of virtual education, calling it "the wave of the future." But he and Meisser both admit to questions and concerns about the plan. After struggling with budget problems for the past three years, the School Board could not endorse a proposal that costs the district any money, Meisser said.

Flood said K12's plan would result in added revenue for the district because it would receive a management fee as the charter administrator.

Board member Meisser said she is concerned about a lawsuit filed last year against Wisconsin Connections Academy by the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the state's largest teachers union. The suit alleges that the school violates the state's open enrollment and charter laws, WEAC's legal counsel Lucy Brown said.

Under the Appleton model, which is identical to the K12 proposal, students enroll in the virtual school through the state's open enrollment law. That allows a student living in one public school district to enroll in any other district in the state as long as certain criteria are met.

The students do not physically attend classes at the charter school.

Virtual success story for Monroe

Published Thursday, March 16, 2006 8:15:43 AM Central Time

By Jason Busch

of the Times

MONROE -- If recent enrollment numbers are any indication, the Monroe Virtual High School is virtually flourishing.

And backed by legislation led by State Rep. Brett Davis, R-Oregon, -- passed through the state Assembly and Senate last week -- which aims to ensure virtual schools remain a viable high-quality option for students in Wisconsin, the virtual school looks to become even more firmly entrenched in the School District of Monroe for a long time to come.

"I understand the concern from the state level," Monroe Superintendent Craig Jefson said, "the virtual school is not for every kid. You have to have intellect, reading level, support from parents and computer skills (among other qualities).

"But there's a need for it," Jefson continued. "This is not a criticism of public schools because I was a principal for so many years. But I wish we had this option earlier."

Jefson and Principal of Charter Schools/Outreach Coordinator Dan Bauer both said the Monroe virtual school's growth since its inception during the 2002-03 school year is proof positive the program is in high demand.

According to statistics provided by Bauer, when the virtual school went online in 2002-03 only about 12 students were enrolled. Within a year about 50 students were enrolled and by the 2004-05 school year nearly 75 students were participating in the virtual school. Now in the second half of the 2005-06 school year, the Monroe Virtual High School has about 164 students.

Bauer said the district received 418 open enrollment applications this year for the virtual school's 2006-07 school year -- 363 for the virtual high school and another 55 for the virtual middle school, which starts classes for the first

time this fall. He estimated the district will carry over about 125 students from those currently enrolled into the 2006-07 school year and projected nearly 50 percent of the open enrollment applicants will be enrolled, as well.

If all goes as expected, the virtual high school should have at least 300 students enrolled next year. Jefson and Bauer even expressed hope the district could pull in as many as 70 percent of open enrollment applicants.

"We're making contacts and doing everything we can to get that additional 20 percent to come here next year," Bauer said.

In addition to flexibility -- it's available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day -- the virtual high school has grown dramatically because of the quality and variety of course offerings available to students. The virtual school provides students with more than 725 classes to choose from, from accredited institutions such as Brigham Young University, the University of Missouri, University of Nebraska and Stetson University.

Monroe's Virtual High School also may be the most unique virtual high school in cyberspace. Virtual school teachers conduct home visits anywhere in Wisconsin; credit is offered for work, off-campus physical education and service learning; teachers proctor many student tests in person; electronic tutorials are offered through the Web site; students are allowed to take up to two classes in their home schools if they're classes not offered online, such as chorus or band; and home-schooled students can transfer in credits earned at home.

Jefson and Bauer also stated the virtual high school draws a wide array of students, from non-traditional students like a grandmother in her fifties to students with physical disabilities which prevent them from attending a traditional school. The district even has enrolled students who have struggled in traditional school environments and been expelled, as well as one student, Keith Anderson of Cross Plains, who was selected as a candidate for the U.S. Presidential Scholars program, a annual distinction awarded to only the top 500 high school seniors nationally.

"There's an accountability component built in," Jefson said, which makes the virtual school popular with parents, too. "All the coursework

and curriculum, all the testing meets state standards and national standards. Students who graduate receive a state of Wisconsin high school diploma and a Wisconsin education, something they can take with them anywhere."

Jefson said if Monroe's virtual high school keeps growing at its present rate it has potential to become as large as Monroe's traditional high school. "It's financially good for the district," he said. "We get criticized sometimes for not being creative. Well, people are going to look back on this and say this is the cutting edge."

Both Bauer and Jefson acknowledged recent legal battles between the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) and two school districts with virtual charter schools, which Rep. Davis' bill, Assembly Bill (AB) 1060, is meant to, in part, combat.

"Passing the virtual school legislation through the full Legislature is an important step for education innovation and student achievement in Wisconsin," Davis said. "I am hopeful Governor Doyle takes advantage of this opportunity and signs the bill into law."

Davis noted that the legislation requires a Wisconsin licensed teacher to be involved in student assessment and allows local school districts to determine how their students learn best.

Specifically, AB 1060 clarifies the definition of a teacher in a virtual school. Per the recommendations of the Virtual School Task Force, the teacher in a virtual school is defined as the person who assigns grades and credits the student. That person must be licensed by DPI.

"If (the state) shuts down the virtual schools, shuts down the one in Monroe -- which is accountable to the state, the (teacher's union), WEAC, the teachers -- the accountability level goes down a lot," Jefson said. "Wisconsin is one of the best states for education and the way we're doing it (in Monroe), everybody's satisfied, including our local teachers."

In fact, Jefson said, he'd be happy if Monroe was given control of every virtual school in the state. "We should franchise it," he said, "put it all in Monroe. We'd be happy to do, we could do it."

Bauer added he's been happy with the trust home-schoolers have placed in Monroe's virtual school. "There are 90,000 (home-schooled students) and growing in Wisconsin," Bauer said. "The way we can bring them back is through a virtual school with a broad curriculum, which parents can still have control over."

"And we're not taking kids just for the dollars," Jefson explained in a nod to the revenue the virtual school generates for the district.

"This school started because of our concerns over the large number of kids leaving the district for home schooling," Bauer added.

The School District of Monroe only charges a $25 enrollment fee to virtual school students but it also receives about $5,785 per virtual school pupil in state aid, roughly half of what the district receives for students in the traditional schools, but still more than the district would receive without those students, Jefson pointed out.

"We appreciate Brett's (Davis) support of our virtual school," Jefson stated. "I think his heart's in the right place, I just hate to see this become a political issue. Sometimes political issues tend to forget about the kids."

For more information on Monroe's virtual schools, visit www.virtualdiploma.net, the Monroe Virtual High School's Web site.

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LOCAL NEWS

Posted Nov. 19, 2003

Online learning likely to grow in popularity

First conference on virtual schools guides districts

By Kathy Walsh Nufer
Post-Crescent staff writer

WISCONSIN DELLS — With online learning poised for "explosive growth" in Wisconsin, school districts are scrambling to get ready.

At the first annual Wisconsin Virtual School Conference Tuesday, educators discussed the challenges they faced, including funding and logistical issues, in catering to students comfortable learning in cyberspace.

Their numbers are growing rapidly, said Bob Blohmeyer, senior researcher for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), which studies the impact of online learning.

Blohmeyer predicted the Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS), which partners with 70 school systems around the state and enrolled 230 high school students this semester alone, can expect "way more than double that number next year."

Connie Radtke, who coordinates the Appleton eSchool, which started in 2002 as part of the first wave of virtual schools in the state, can second that prediction locally.

"I'm projecting as many as 300 to 350 high school students taking online courses this summer," she said. "Last summer, we had 77."

Radtke was among 110 educators to attend the WVS-sponsored conference, designed to help districts like Appleton network with fellow online providers, and other school systems get started.

What is it?

Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) is a Cooperative Educational Services Agency No. 9-based service in Tomahawk that provides courses and resources to districts interested in online education. For more information, go to www.cesa9.k12.wi/wvhs. After Dec. 1, go to www.wisconsinvirtualschool.org.

Dawn Nordine, WVS director, said some districts are scared thinking that they have to offer online education or they will lose students and the accompanying state aid, but they should not panic.

She said those districts don't have to reinvent the wheel and create their own courses, which is extremely costly. WVS has resources and a lineup of 60 high school courses, along with a middle school initiative, and by contracting for the courses, the districts get to count online students as their own.

Wisconsin Connections Academy, Appleton's K-8 virtual school that draws most of its students from out of district, was the target of a Wisconsin Education Association Council lawsuit, with the state's largest teachers union charging WCA broke the state's open enrollment and charter school laws. A judge declared it legal last spring and WEAC said it planned to appeal.

Conference participants stressed that while virtual learning is not for everyone, it is a way to meet the needs of some students.

According to a WVS survey, most students take online courses to make up high school credits, but the number of high-performing students in increasing.

Currently, WVS students have a 51 percent course completion rate, and considering that many have a history of failure, that's a good statistic, Nordine said.

Small districts and those with enrollment decline and difficult budget cuts to make are looking at online learning as a way to enhance offerings, prevent students from leaving their districts, and draw in homeschooled students.

When other funds are drying up, the federal No Child Left Behind Education law has substantial dollars available for online education, including much-needed teacher training that will be necessary as online courses grow, Nordine said.

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Instead, they are taught at home by their parents, using the curriculum and a computer supplied by K12 or Sylvan Ventures. Lessons are monitored electronically by a teacher.

Although WEAC officials have not discussed what to do if another virtual charter school opens, Brown said it is unlikely that Kewaskum would be added to the Appleton lawsuit because it would delay the process.

Open enrollment applications for next school year must be submitted during a two-week period that begins Feb. 3. The window leaves little time for the Kewaskum School Board to make up its mind about the plan if K12 is to achieve its goal of opening a charter school in the coming fall.

Flood said the company would look elsewhere if a deal with Kewaskum falls through. Meisser said the conservative nature of the community makes the plan more likely to succeed here than in either Lake Mills or McFarland.

"Let's face it, this is not Dane County," she said. "I just think Washington County would be more open to this."

A version of this story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Jan. 19, 2003.

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EDUCATION REPORTER
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JUNE 2003

A 'Virtual' Escape from the Public Schoolhouse

APPLETON, WI - In Wisconsin and at least eight other states, thousands of students are enrolling in online "virtual" charter schools. These new cyber schools are run by private educational ventures, teaching students at home online in a form of "distance learning." They are quickly becoming popular with parents seeking an alternative to bricks-and-mortar public schools and the problems associated with them. Home cyber schools allow parents direct involvement in their child's education.

The Wisconsin Connections Academy opened last fall under a charter granted by the Appleton Area School District, and educated 250 students from 85 school districts in its first year. The academy has 275 students enrolled for next year with 650 applications pending.

A second virtual school, the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, will open this fall under a charter granted by the rural Ozaukee County School District. With 300 students already enrolled and 600 applications pending, the Virtual Academy is making waves before its first students have logged on. School district administrators across the state are concerned about the prospect of losing dozens of students, and the state funds that go with them, to the new charter schools.

Under Wisconsin's open enrollment laws, students can enroll in any school district their parents wish. The student's "home" district must pay the $5,000 cost of educating each child online for one school year. "I'm always concerned when there's a drain on our budget," David Schmidt, superintendent of the Waukesha School District, told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (5-25-03). The Waukesha district reportedly could lose as many as 39 students to the Virtual Academy. The Milwaukee Public Schools have 44 students approved for enrollment in the academy, more than any single district in the state so far.

Schmidt admitted that if parents continue lining up to enroll their children in cyber schools, Wisconsin school districts may be forced to begin denying students open enrollment. Others are suggesting that the Wisconsin legislature reconsider the open enrollment laws and some districts are even contemplating starting their own cyber schools in an effort to stem the tide.

Virtual schools have the teacher unions up in arms as well. The Wisconsin Education Association (the state's NEA affiliate) filed suit last September against the Wisconsin Connections Academy, claiming the cyber school is illegal and ineligible for state funding because it does not physically enroll students. Also named in the suit are the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Appleton Area School District, which the union claims illegally granted the academy's charter.

On the other side of the spectrum, some homeschooling groups fear that virtual charter schools provide public school districts with the means to lure home-schooling families into the system, noting that many of the new cyber school students were already homeschooled. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) called the Wisconsin Connections Academy "a trojan horse," and warned homeschoolers that families who enroll their children will "waive certain parental rights and agree to homeschool according to public school rules."

V/

HSLDA noted that in other states where cyber schools are operating, "more and more regulations are gradually placed on the enrolled homeschooling family each year. If the family does not comply, the 'virtual' school will demand return of the computer, curriculum, etc."

The Connections Academies are K-8 schools sponsored by Sylvan Ventures, the research and investment arm of Sylvan Learning Systems Inc. (Their website is www.connectionsacademy.com) Sylvan provides the curriculum, a staff of six teachers, computers for each student, and internet access to students' homes. In addition to the new charter school in Wisconsin, Connections Academies are operating in Colorado and Pennsylvania (fall 2003), with legislative initiatives underway to introduce them in Florida and Georgia.

The K-12 Virtual Academies are operated by a private company headed by former Education Secretary William Bennett. Established in 1999 by Bennett and a group of educators and corporate leaders concerned about education, Virtual Academies offer a K-12 curriculum in six subjects: language arts, math, science, history, art, and music. Computer systems with printers and internet connection are provided. Instructional materials include textbooks, workbooks, planning and progress tools, maps, math and science supplies, videos and CDs.

Students are graded by both parents and teachers, with teachers awarding semester grades. Parents review their children's work on a daily basis, while teachers review the work online. Parent-teacher conferences are conducted by telephone every two weeks.

K-12 Virtual Academies claim to provide a quality education and to involve parents in program design and development. The website www.k12.com states that "more than 1,000 parents have volunteered to help us create our program and gauge its effectiveness. Parents participate in surveys, focus groups, lesson reviews, round-table discussions, and product testing."

Bennett's company denies that its Virtual Academies are detrimental to homeschooling. "We strongly support home schooling," the website states. "We believe families should be able to make their own choices in how their child is educated, and the more options families have, the more they are empowered."

In addition to the new Waukesha charter school in Wisconsin, Virtual Academies are operating in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

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Virtual high school to stay put

Waukesha School Board OKs revised contract

By AMY HETZNER
ahetzner@journalsentinel.com

Posted: Jan. 11, 2006

Waukesha - Computers will remain powered up for students in the School District's v school after the School Board approved a revised five-year contract at a meeting Wedı

The future of iQ Academies at Wisconsin, the Waukesha-based school that provides online instruction to students around the state, had been in doubt after School Board members raised concerns about a projected d the end of the school year.

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As it is, the school is expected to p \$604,000 deficit for the year endin But revisions to the district's contra KC Distance Learning, the private company that manages the school, mean that the di won't incur further debt even if iQ doesn't add enrollment for the next school year, dist officials said.

The contract changes were approved 8-0 by the School Board on Wednesday. Board n Daniel Warren was absent.

Prior to Wednesday's meeting, board member David Bauer said he had been prepared favor of closing iQ.

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But with $1 million already invested in the charter school, he said, "that's a more expe solution to the district to stop it now."

The vote is in time for a $300,000 marketing push tied to the February enrollment peri state's public school choice option, which allows any Wisconsin student to attend any school in the state, so long as there is room.

With nearly $6,000 in state aid accompanying each student, iQ is dependent on attract students to make money.

School Board member Ellen Langill questioned why the district would share the costs expensive marketing campaign when it has concerns about reducing iQ's expenses.

"If we get 400 more students, that's almost $1,000 for each student," she said.

But Superintendent David Schmidt said the difference between an enrollment of 600 s and 1,000 students amounted to $216,000 for the district. It also means a cumulative d more than $1 million instead of $880,000.

"The goal of the School District is to eliminate that deficit as quickly as we can," Schn after the meeting.

The situation is made even more critical because the district faces a $3 million shortfal '07 unless it makes cuts to programs and staff in its traditional schools.

Prior to Wednesday's meeting, Waukesha police Lt. Craig Rivers urged that the Schoo weigh the virtual school's worth against that of other programs in the district.

"We currently have three high schools," said Rivers, who said he was also speaking as and taxpayer. "We need to take care of those high schools first."

The financial problems with iQ, which had been projected to be nearly break-even eco by the start of the 2006-'07 school year, have been blamed primarily on revenue and ei that didn't meet expectations and costs that exceeded them.

Among the contractual changes approved Wednesday were reduced fees charged by K Distance Learning to the School District for administration, software development and student technology fee. The company also is supposed to start splitting any surpluses ! the district, instead of waiting until the company recoups its investment first, and it is i its per-pupil payment to the district for teachers.

From the Jan. 12, 2006, editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
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Online high school gets Waukesha panel's vote

School District to work on contract, planning

By AMY HETZNER
ahetzner@journalsentinel.com

Last Updated: Dec. 3, 2003

Waukesha - A possible virtual high school got a preliminary vote of confidence Tuesday when a School Board committee directed administrators to proceed with planning for the school.

The School Board's Curriculum and Instruction Committee voted 4-0 for the district to work on a contract for the school with Keystone National High School.

"It means we're going to move on with the concept," board member Barbara Brzenk said.

The full, nine-member School Board also will be asked Dec. 10 to give conceptual approval to the school, which would offer a full online curriculum and its own high school diploma, according to district administrators.

Several board members said Tuesday they had heard nothing but positive comments from parents about the potential school.

"All of the constituents who have called me on this have been very fired up," board member Joseph Como said.

The votes give only tentative approval because the district has not worked out a contract with Keystone. Superintendent David Schmidt said he hoped to be able to bring a contract to the board by the first week of January.

Timing is crucial because the district will have to recruit students living in other school districts during the February enrollment period for the state's public school choice system. Otherwise, the district could incur additional costs.

"That is the key for the first year, getting started," Schmidt said of marketing the new school through open enrollment. "The issue really is getting a number of students signed up within the window" of time.

The district hopes to enroll 250 students in 2004-'05, most of whom are currently in private or home schools. The majority of the school's students would be drawn from beyond the district's borders.

Start-up costs for the school had been estimated to hit $275,000 this school year, with $125,000 devoted to marketing. But Schmidt said the district has already revised that figure, with more going toward marketing.

The idea of forming a virtual school has been on the fast track recently in Waukesha, partly driven by the district's loss of students to similar elementary programs. This school year, about 30 children living in the Waukesha district enrolled in virtual schools run by the Appleton and Northern Ozaukee districts, using the state open enrollment option.

For every student the district loses because of open enrollment in 2003-'04, it has to pay $5,435 to the student's new district.

School District administrators have billed the virtual high school as serving an untapped market. But one other Wisconsin school district - the Monroe School District - operates a virtual charter school that has 45 students, 35 of whom enrolled

through open enrollment.

Brzenk noted there already are six virtual schools operating in Wisconsin and many more likely to follow.

"If we wait any longer, we're losing the ability to attract students," she said.

From the Dec. 3, 2003 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

2001 ASSEMBLY BILL 893

March 7, 2002 – Introduced by Representatives J. LEHMAN, TURNER and PLOUFF, cosponsored by Senators GROBSCHMIDT, COWLES and SCHULTZ. Referred to Committee on Education Reform.

AN ACT *to amend* 118.51 (10) of the statutes; **relating to:** the assignment of pupils to schools or programs under the open enrollment program.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under the current open enrollment program, under certain conditions a pupil may attend public school in a school district other than the one in which the pupil resides. The school board of the nonresident school district assigns a pupil who has been accepted under the program to a school or program within the nonresident school district.

This bill prohibits the school board from assigning a pupil to a school or program in which the pupil will receive less than 50% of his or her instruction from a licensed teacher who is present in the same room as the pupil.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION **1.** 118.51 (10) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.51 **(10)** PUPIL ASSIGNMENT. A nonresident school board may assign pupils accepted to attend public school in the school district under this section to a school or program within the school district, except that a nonresident school board may not

assign a pupil to a school or program in which the pupil will receive less than 50% of his or her instruction from a licensed teacher who is present in the same room as the pupil. The school board may give preference in attendance at a school, program, class or grade to residents of the school district who live outside the school's attendance area.

(END)

2005 SENATE BILL 628

February 24, 2006 – Introduced by Senators OLSEN and S. FITZGERALD, cosponsored by Representatives DAVIS, TOWNS, MONTGOMERY, UNDERHEIM and MUSSER. Referred to Committee on Education.

AN ACT ***to renumber and amend*** 118.40 (3) (c); ***to amend*** 118.19 (1), 118.40 (2r) (bm), 118.40 (2r) (c) 1., 118.40 (2r) (d) 1., 118.40 (2r) (e) 2. and 121.02 (1) (a) 2.; and ***to create*** 115.001 (16), 118.40 (2r) (c) 5. and 118.40 (8) of the statutes; **relating to:** virtual charter schools.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, any person who teaches in a public school, including a charter school, must hold a teaching license or permit issued by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This bill specifies that in a virtual charter school, "teaching" means assigning grades or credits for the pupils. The bill defines a virtual charter school as a charter school in which instruction is provided primarily through means of the Internet and the pupils and teachers are geographically remote.

Current law provides that a charter school established by a school board must be located in the school district; an independent charter school established by the city of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, or the Milwaukee Area Technical College must be located in the city of Milwaukee; and an independent charter school established by the University of Wisconsin–Parkside must be located in a unified school district that is located in the county in which the University of Wisconsin–Parkside is situated or in an adjacent county. This bill provides that these restrictions do not apply to virtual charter schools.

In general, current law provides that only pupils who reside in the school district in which a charter school is located may attend the charter school. This bill exempts virtual charter schools from this restriction.

Current law provides that if the University of Wisconsin–Parkside establishes a charter school, the state must pay a sum to the unified school district in which it is located to reimburse the school district for the reduction in state aid resulting from the loss of pupils to the charter school. This bill provides that this payment does not apply if the charter school established is a virtual charter school.

For further information see the ***state and local*** fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 115.001 (16) of the statutes is created to read:

115.001 **(16)** VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL. "Virtual charter school" means a charter school in which instruction is provided primarily through means of the Internet, and the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the charter school are geographically remote from each other.

SECTION 2. 118.19 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.19 **(1)** Any person seeking to teach in a public school, including a charter school, or in a school or institution operated by a county or the state shall first procure a license or permit from the department. For the purposes of this subsection, in a virtual charter school "teaching" means assigning grades or credits to pupils.

SECTION 3. 118.40 (2r) (bm) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (bm) The common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee area technical college district board may only establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located in the school district operating under ch. 119. The chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside may only establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located in a unified school district that is located in the county in which the University of Wisconsin–Parkside is situated or

in an adjacent county. This paragraph does not apply to the establishment of a virtual charter school.

SECTION 4. 118.40 (2r) (c) 1. of the statutes, as affected by 2005 Wisconsin Act .... (Assembly Bill 730), is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (c) 1. Except as provided in subds. 3. ~~and~~, 4., and 5., only pupils who reside in the school district in which a charter school established under this subsection is located may attend the charter school.

SECTION 5. 118.40 (2r) (c) 5. of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (c) 5. A pupil may attend a virtual charter school regardless of the pupil's school district of residence.

SECTION 6. 118.40 (2r) (d) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (d) 1. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools under this subsection hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department. For the purposes of this subsection, in a virtual charter school "instructional staff" means the employees who assign grades or credits to pupils.

SECTION 7. 118.40 (2r) (e) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (e) 2. If the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside establishes or contracts for the establishment of a charter school under this subsection, other than a virtual charter school, in March the department shall pay to the unified school district in which the charter school is located, from the appropriation under s. 20.255 (2) (fm), an amount equal to the amount of school aid per pupil to which the unified school district is eligible in the current school year multiplied by the number of pupils attending the charter school who were previously enrolled in the unified school district.

SECTION 8. 118.40 (3) (c) of the statutes is renumbered 118.40 (3) (c) 1. and amended to read:

118.40 **(3)** (c) 1. A school board may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the school district, except that if 2 or more school boards enter into an agreement under s. 66.0301 to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within one of the school districts, and if one or more school boards enter into an agreement with the board of control of a cooperative educational service agency to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within the boundaries of the cooperative educational service agency. This subdivision does not apply to the establishment of a virtual charter school.

2. A school board may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private, sectarian school to a charter school.

SECTION 9. 118.40 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 **(8)** LOCATION OF VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS. For the purposes of sub. (7) (a), (am) 1., and (ar), a virtual charter school is considered to be located in the following school district:

1. If a school board establishes or contracts with a person to establish the virtual charter school, in the school district governed by that school board.

2. If the common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, or Milwaukee Area Technical College establishes or contracts with a person to establish the virtual charter school, in the school district operating under ch. 119.

SECTION 10. 121.02 (1) (a) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

121.02 **(1)** (a) 2. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools located in the school district hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department. The state superintendent shall promulgate rules defining "instructional staff" for purposes of this subdivision, except that in a virtual charter school "instructional staff" means the employees who assign grades or credits to pupils.

(END)

2005 ASSEMBLY BILL 1060

February 23, 2006 – Introduced by Representatives DAVIS, TOWNS, MONTGOMERY, UNDERHEIM and MUSSER, cosponsored by Senators OLSEN and S. FITZGERALD. Referred to Committee on Education Reform.

AN ACT ***to renumber and amend*** 118.40 (3) (c); ***to amend*** 118.19 (1), 118.40 (2r) (bm), 118.40 (2r) (c) 1., 118.40 (2r) (d) 1., 118.40 (2r) (e) 2. and 121.02 (1) (a) 2.; and ***to create*** 115.001 (16), 118.40 (2r) (c) 5. and 118.40 (8) of the statutes; **relating to:** virtual charter schools.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, any person who teaches in a public school, including a charter school, must hold a teaching license or permit issued by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This bill specifies that in a virtual charter school, "teaching" means assigning grades or credits for the pupils. The bill defines a virtual charter school as a charter school in which instruction is provided primarily through means of the Internet and the pupils and teachers are geographically remote.

Current law provides that a charter school established by a school board must be located in the school district; an independent charter school established by the city of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, or the Milwaukee Area Technical College must be located in the city of Milwaukee; and an independent charter school established by the University of Wisconsin–Parkside must be located in a unified school district that is located in the county in which the University of Wisconsin–Parkside is situated or in an adjacent county. This bill provides that these restrictions do not apply to virtual charter schools.

In general, current law provides that only pupils who reside in the school district in which a charter school is located may attend the charter school. This bill exempts virtual charter schools from this restriction.

Current law provides that if the University of Wisconsin–Parkside establishes a charter school, the state must pay a sum to the unified school district in which it is located to reimburse the school district for the reduction in state aid resulting from the loss of pupils to the charter school. This bill provides that this payment does not apply if the charter school established is a virtual charter school.

For further information see the ***state and local*** fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 115.001 (16) of the statutes is created to read:

115.001 **(16)** VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL. "Virtual charter school" means a charter school in which instruction is provided primarily through means of the Internet, and the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the charter school are geographically remote from each other.

SECTION 2. 118.19 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.19 **(1)** Any person seeking to teach in a public school, including a charter school, or in a school or institution operated by a county or the state shall first procure a license or permit from the department. For the purposes of this subsection, in a virtual charter school "teaching" means assigning grades or credits to pupils.

SECTION 3. 118.40 (2r) (bm) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (bm) The common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee area technical college district board may only establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located in the school district operating under ch. 119. The chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside may only establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located in a unified school district that is located in the county in which the University of Wisconsin–Parkside is situated or

in an adjacent county. This paragraph does not apply to the establishment of a virtual charter school.

SECTION 4. 118.40 (2r) (c) 1. of the statutes, as affected by 2005 Wisconsin Act .... (Assembly Bill 730), is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (c) 1. Except as provided in subds. 3. ~~and~~, 4., and 5., only pupils who reside in the school district in which a charter school established under this subsection is located may attend the charter school.

SECTION 5. 118.40 (2r) (c) 5. of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (c) 5. A pupil may attend a virtual charter school regardless of the pupil's school district of residence.

SECTION 6. 118.40 (2r) (d) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (d) 1. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools under this subsection hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department. For the purposes of this subsection, in a virtual charter school "instructional staff" means the employees who assign grades or credits to pupils.

SECTION 7. 118.40 (2r) (e) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 **(2r)** (e) 2. If the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Parkside establishes or contracts for the establishment of a charter school under this subsection, other than a virtual charter school, in March the department shall pay to the unified school district in which the charter school is located, from the appropriation under s. 20.255 (2) (fm), an amount equal to the amount of school aid per pupil to which the unified school district is eligible in the current school year multiplied by the number of pupils attending the charter school who were previously enrolled in the unified school district.

SECTION 8. 118.40 (3) (c) of the statutes is renumbered 118.40 (3) (c) 1. and amended to read:

118.40 **(3)** (c) 1. A school board may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the school district, except that if 2 or more school boards enter into an agreement under s. 66.0301 to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within one of the school districts, and if one or more school boards enter into an agreement with the board of control of a cooperative educational service agency to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within the boundaries of the cooperative educational service agency. This subdivision does not apply to the establishment of a virtual charter school.

2. A school board may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private, sectarian school to a charter school.

SECTION 9. 118.40 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 **(8)** LOCATION OF VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS. For the purposes of sub. (7) (a), (am) 1., and (ar), a virtual charter school is considered to be located in the following school district:

1. If a school board establishes or contracts with a person to establish the virtual charter school, in the school district governed by that school board.

2. If the common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, or Milwaukee Area Technical College establishes or contracts with a person to establish the virtual charter school, in the school district operating under ch. 119.

SECTION 10. 121.02 (1) (a) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

121.02 **(1)** (a) 2. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools located in the school district hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department. The state superintendent shall promulgate rules defining "instructional staff" for purposes of this subdivision, except that in a virtual charter school "instructional staff" means the employees who assign grades or credits to pupils.

(END)